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Testimony in Support of SB 190, An Act Concerning an Income Tax Deduction for Expenses Associated with Organ Donation.

For over 20 years my doctors and I managed kidney disease with a constant monitoring, medication and diet. I thought that this would be the way I would live the rest of my life. But early in 2001 my doctor announced that I needed to go visit the dialysis unit at Danbury Hospital. Even after so many years of incorporating kidney disease into my life the shock of this message has stayed with me. There was no way for me to prepare myself for the loss of control I felt. A visit to the Dialysis Unit filled me with fear, sadness and resolve. There had to be another way.

I prepared myself for peritoneal dialysis a daily procedure I would do myself in my home. Meanwhile my husband and dear partner wanted to tell the world what was happening to me. In a message entitled "Center of the Universe" he shared the news about kidney failure. No, he never asked anyone to donate. But the response was immediate and overwhelming.

Friends and family members from CT and all over the country came forward for consideration to donate a kidney. My Doctors and Transplant Coordinator at Yale New Haven Hospital Transplant Center processed four individuals. The first 2 CT friends were a match. Both women, Linda Rammler an education-disability consultant in Middlefield and Nancy Lavers, a massage therapist and active Danbury Lions Club leader came forward. There were many conversations with the Transplant Coordinator

and careful screening. They took time from their lives to travel to New Haven for bloodwork and then returned for additional medical tests. Nancy reported happily that she counted the vials of blood she gave, 14 in one day. There were more conversations with their own families and mine. We had dinner and spent time together on Candlewood Lake. Both women are self employed, neither of them thought about the interruption to their lives or work let alone the financial sacrifice.

When the testing was complete it was Nancy that was chosen to be the best match. The transplant was arranged and on October 30, 2001 the surgery took place. Nancy's kidney was one of the earliest at Yale to be removed using "surgeon assisted laproscpe". And I was to go on a new generation of immunosuppression medications, a protocol that I will utilize for the rest of my life to keep my new kidney safe and healthy.

It was my experience that donors come forward out of generosity and my thanks and gratitude to Nancy and also to Linda will remain with me forever, but a tax credit to future donors will be another tool to thank and encourage organ donors.